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INDIAN FIELD SPORTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

OF

INDIAN FIELD SPORTS

SELECTED AND REPRODUCED FROM THE COLOURED ENGRAVINGS FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1807 AFTER DESIGNS BY CAPTAIN THOMAS WILLIAMSON OF THE BENGAL ARMY

Westminster

ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND COMPANY

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MDCCCXCII

1892

PREFACE

THIS republication of a selection of the illustrations from Captain Williamson's celebrated work on Oriental Field Sports has been undertaken in the hope that such graphic records of past days in India may still successfully appeal to a wide circle.

The original edition, published in 1807 by Edward Orme, containing forty plates with descriptive letterpress to each, and dedicated to His Majesty King George the Third, has long been a scarce book, fetching an ever-increasing price on the rare occasions when copies have been available at book auctions or elsewhere.

In their original form, the plates, coloured mezzo-tint engravings from drawings by Samuel Howett after the author's designs, measure eighteen inches by thirteen, and in the reductions of them now offered to the public no efforts have been spared to reproduce all the artistic features of the originals in a convenient size, and at a moderate price.

The work of selecting the illustrations to be reproduced has been no easy task, but it is believed that the result presents a typical collection which may perhaps be added to hereafter.

The descriptions of the plates, based to some extent on the original letterpress, have been carefully prepared to meet the requirements of those to whom sport in the East and

its surroundings are as yet unfamiliar, and at the same time with a view to interesting Indian sportsmen generally. In this connection the following extract from the original preface might be quoted with advantage :—

> It is not merely to the Sportsman, that this Work is addressed. It is offered to the Public as depicting the Manners, Customs, Scenery, and Costume of a territory, now intimately blended with the British Empire, and of such importance to its welfare, as to annex a certain degree of consequence to every publication, that either exhibits, or professes to impart, a knowledge of whatever may hitherto have been concealed, or that remains unfolded to our view.
>
> Herein the British Nimrod may view, with no small satisfaction, a new and arduous species of the Chase. The curious observer of Nature will feel equal transport, in contemplating that part of her works, which she has appropriated to other soils. The Artist may reap a rich harvest of information, enabling him, not only to comprehend more fully the scenery of the torrid zone, but to adorn his own compositions with a greater variety of those beauties, which the climate and narrow limits of his own country cannot furnish. The Philosopher and the Historian may either confirm or correct their conceptions of former details ; and, to say the least, even those who, devoid of care for the past or for the future, seek for present recreation only, may in these pages find that which, either from its novelty or its attraction, may help them to pass with pleasure through many a lingering hour.

In addition to *Oriental Field Sports,* a second edition of which was issued on a reduced scale soon after the publication of the first edition, Captain Williamson was the author of *The East India Vade-Mecum, or complete guide to Gentlemen intended for the Civil, Military or Naval Service of the Hon. East India Company.* 8vo. Lond: 1810, of which a second edition appeared in 1825 after his death, remodelled by Dr. J. B. Gilchrist; and various other works, on British Field Sports, Mathematics and Angling. He also supplied the letterpress to *The European in India, from a collection of drawings by Charles Doyley, Esqre.* 4to. Lond: 1813.

A. C.

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HUNTERS GOING OUT IN THE MORNING

GOING OUT IN THE MORNING

THIS scene represents the encampment of the English officers of a Native Infantry Regiment in the early years of the present century. In a *tope*, or grove of trees, more commonly the mango-tree—with which Bengal and the North-West Provinces are so abundantly planted—are tents of various shapes and sizes. That in the right foreground is a double-poled tent, perhaps thirty feet long by twenty broad, and especially convenient as giving in the centre a large space free from the interruption of poles. In front of it is an elephant on its haunches, while one of the sportsmen is mounting by a ladder to an old-fashioned *haudah*, such as we found in use among the natives of the country. In more modern times the construction of the *haudah* has been altered from something like a railed couch to what more resembles the body of a mail phaeton, with a seat in front for the sportsman and one behind for his native attendant, the whole generally enclosed by iron rails and having various contrivances for the carrying of the battery, provisions, &c. In front of the elephant is a rider equipped much after the fashion of a modern jockey,—a fashion that would seem strange enough in the India of to-day—endeavouring to mount a jibbing horse which, as is frequently the case with Indian—or, as they are called, country-bred—horses, has to be blindfolded before it can be approached by a

European. Its tail, it will be noticed, is tipped with pink, a practice still much affected by native owners. On the left is a *shámiáná*, or square tent with a flat roof, commonly used as a sitting-room in the daytime and for a mess-room at night, when the weather is not too cold. Sometimes, as here, the front is left open; at other times its *kanáts*, or movable walls, enclose it on all sides. Immediately in front is a pad elephant, *i.e.*, one on which the hunter's seat is a pad of canvas thickly stuffed with straw and lashed round the elephant's body. Immediately behind the animal's head sits the native driver, or *máhout*, wielding his *ánkus*, a formidable iron prod used for guidance or correction. A small elephant a little to the right is saddled, as was not uncommon in bygone days, and mounted by a rider whose composite costume looks like a yearning after Melton. In the centre are two native servants, "bearers" or valets probably, clad in the chintz dresses padded with cotton which are still so common among them in the winter months. Greyhounds and pet dogs, a *dari*, or tent-carpet, stretched on the tent-ropes to dry, the muskets and cooking utensils of the guard, fill up the foreground, while in the middle distance is a pair of combative nags that the *syces*, or grooms, are trying to separate.

BEATING SUGAR CANES FOR A HOG

BEATING SUGAR-CANES FOR A HOG

HOG-HUNTING, or pig-sticking, as the sport is more familiarly called, is practised all over India. In Bengal, the paradise of pig-stickers, the spear, a bamboo of some eight or nine feet in length, weighted with lead at the butt, is carried by the rider close to his knee, the point being depressed, and driven into the pig as he comes up with it. In other parts of the country the spear, which is shorter, is thrown at the pig, the rider thereby being left defenceless for the time being. With a stout boar-pig, the chase is long and arduous, his pace when in good condition being such as requires a very fleet horse to come up with him. From November to April the pig fattens upon his beloved sugar-cane and becomes gross in the extreme. But when the canes are off the ground, and he has to travel long distances in quest of food, he becomes low in flesh and correspondingly active. It is then that the pig-sticker delights in his favourite sport. In the print before us a host of beaters, armed with long bamboo poles, has just driven him out of his covert. The sportsmen, stationed at the corner of the field beneath a group of cocoa-palms, are awaiting him as he breaks into the open and bursts at full speed across the *khidris*, or poppy-beds prepared for the opium crop. In the centre is seen the rustic plough,—a mere wedge of hard wood tipped with iron—from which at the appearance of the pig the frightened

bullocks have broken loose, and the equally frightened ploughmen have scattered in all directions. In the foreground, at the border of the sugar *khet*, is a well from which the cultivators are irrigating the land, the bucket or leathern trough being suspended from a long pole pivoted on an upright, and given a leverage by a weight of mud at its farther end. In the distance is the pig-sticker's bungalow with a grove of "toddy-trees," or palmyræ, to the left. To the right, beyond the elephant, is a *banian*-tree, covering a considerable area. The dogs in pursuit are a couple of *pariahs*, or village dogs, belonging to no one in particular, but often of use in bringing the pig to bay, or, by giving tongue, indicating the course he has taken when concealed from the sportsman's sight.

THE CHASE AFTER A HOG

THE CHASE AFTER A HOG

THE chase is here at its height, and the artist shows us the beginning of the end. The sportsmen in the background have started fresh game, which seems to be leading them to a river. But our two friends—the one on a chestnut, the other on a grey—are urging the chase of the fellow we saw evicted from the sugar-field, who has made for the lair where his wife and children are awaiting his return in the long reedy grass which the villagers are cutting and stacking to be used hereafter in thatching their cottages. Piggy's domestic solicitude, however, will be unworthily recompensed if the gentleman on the chestnut Arab manages his weapon well; for the boar is tired and only a length in his front, just above the hidden retreat where the sow and her alarmed "sounder" are crouched. His only chance now is that chapter of accidents to which both men and pigs are often left. And in pig-sticking that chapter is a long and varied one. Blind, indeed, is the country over which the course lies, and many a "cropper" is the result from buffalo holes, disused wells, ravines, &c. Another source of danger in such a scene as that before us lies in the *goanches*, or lumps formed by the roots of grass. These *goanches* are the residue of the stubble after it has been fired. In their hardened state they are a frequent stumbling-block to the rider, who cannot stop to pick his way even if he could see what is before him; while, when they rot, they become pitfalls into which the horse's foot goes down with the certain consequence of an ugly fall.

HOG HUNTERS MEETING BY SURPRISE A TIGRESS AND HER CUBS

HOG-HUNTERS MEETING BY SURPRISE A TIGRESS AND CUBS

LIKE the big game of North America, the Indian tiger is now-a-days fast disappearing from the scene, and has to be sought out with elaborate preparation. But a century ago, when he abounded in numbers that would gladden the heart of a modern sportsman, it was not uncommon for those in quest of other game to find themselves face to face with a foe whom their equipment ill-fitted them to encounter. Such an incident, taken from real life, is depicted in the present Plate. As a detachment of troops is marching from Berhampore to Cawnpore, a hog crosses the line, and the officers, snatching spears from their *syces*, always ready for such a contingency, are quickly in pursuit of the quarry. They have not, however, gone far when the foremost rider, already exulting in the thought of taking "first spear," suddenly finds himself abreast of a tigress that with a litter of cubs is basking behind a large *byre* (wild plum) bush. A stampede is the prompt result, some of the sportsmen, owing to the terror of their horses, having a very narrow escape, but succeeding in killing their pig. Returning to camp, they arm themselves for vengeance upon the intruder, but only to find that maternal solicitude has enjoined the better part of valour. In the sloping background of the scene is the line of troops with their baggage animals, camels and elephants, and behind them again the ranges of hills which form a border to the east and west of Bengal and Behar.

CHASING A TIGER ACROSS A RIVER

CHASING A TIGER ACROSS A RIVER

HERE the tiger, driven from his lair in the jungle by the long line of elephants, endeavours to make good his retreat by swimming the river. Unlike the cat, he has no dislike to water, but will readily take to it when pursued, or of his own accord when in search of food, frequently even entering it in order to attack boats, though well manned. In the present instance he seems to have but a poor chance of escaping, for the elephants are close upon him; though, as only a small portion of his body is exposed, he is by no means an easy mark, while, should the ball strike the water, its course is pretty certain to be diverted. Now-a-days an express bullet hitting him in a vital point will either kill him or so wound him that, even if he gets to the bank, he will be tracked by his blood; but the musket of former days was a very uncertain weapon, and the tiger, even though struck in many places, would frequently escape. The river here is evidently not at its height, for the stretch of sand in the centre foreground will in the monsoon be completely covered, and the peasant's hut removed till the dry season enables him to put it up again and raise a scanty crop on the ooze left by the shrunken stream. The building on the farther bank is a Hindoo *mandar*, or temple, with its long flight of steps down to the water, to which, especially if it be that of the Ganges or the Jumna, the devout Hindoo comes to perform his religious rites, or to bring the corpse of a relative to its sacred home.

H. ALAN A. CUMMING, LITH. LEIPZIG

THE DEAD TIGER

THE DEAD TIGER

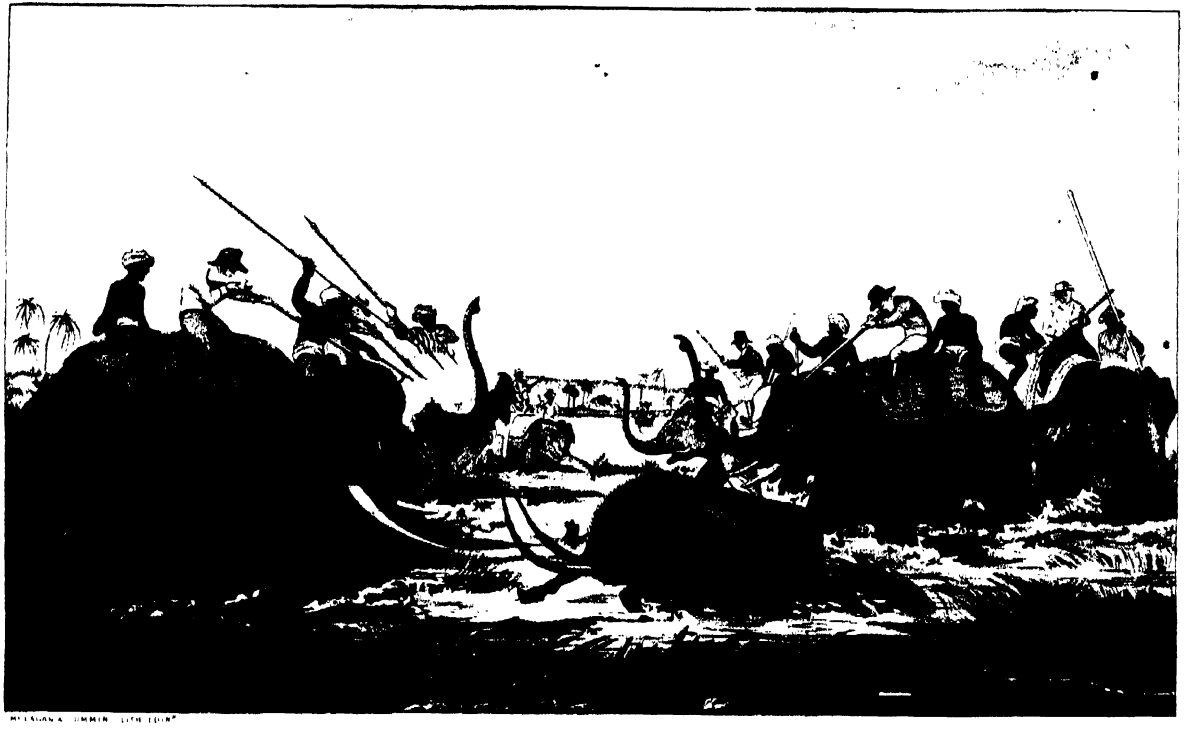
THOUGH he has managed to get across the river, the tiger here receives his *coup-de-grâce*. Brought to bay, he has apparently made a savage attempt to die gloriously by attacking his pursuers, and has no doubt succeeded in terrifying and perhaps severely wounding one or more of the elephants. The terror, indeed, with which he inspires any but the most courageous and well trained of these animals is so great that they not only swerve from his charge, but are frequently seized with a panic and turn tail at the very moment the sportsman is about to take aim. Here the central elephant expresses his mingled terror and vengeance by viciously plunging his tusks into the body of his fallen foe, while crushing in his sides with the full weight of his ponderous knees. His fellow to the right is lending a helping foot, while he raises his trunk and trumpets forth the victory. The beaters rush up to join in the triumph, and the sportsman who has followed the chase on horseback dismounts from his terror-stricken nag, for whose nerves the neighbourhood of even a dying tiger is too much. The various shaped *haudahs* are such as are described under the first Plate, though none of them closely resembles the approved pattern of the present day. The covering seen on the head of the elephant between the two more prominent of his fellows is called a *sarpesh*, or hood, and though rarely used by Europeans, is by natives considered an indispensable part of his full dress.

SHOOTING A LEOPARD

SHOOTING A LEOPARD IN A TREE

WHILE the tiger as a rule prefers the grass jungle as his place of concealment, it is the underwoods, especially on the low shelving banks of rivers, that are most frequented by the leopard. There skulking, it waits for any small game that may come in its way, and carries off sheep, goats, or poultry that may be imprudent or unfortunate enough to wander in its neighbourhood. Cattle of any size it rarely attacks, and, unless wounded, will avoid men. More subtle than the tiger, it is at the same time more ravenous. It is also more vindictive. Tigers have been known to be reared in a domestic state, and to become subject to man's control; but whatever care may be taken in taming a leopard, its treacherous nature is sure, sooner or later, to break out. When pursued, it will rarely show fight. If tracked so closely that escape by concealment is impossible, it will seek safety by springing into a tree rather than turn and face its pursuers with the noble wrath of the tiger. Such is the case in the present illustration. The line of elephants and the attendant beaters have cut off all retreat. The dogs, of which it would make short work if there were no sportsmen in the background, are yelping at its heels. But amid the stately mango-trees all round there may still be a chance of escape, and with catlike activity the beast is quickly up the trunk, trusting under the cover of the foliage to crawl

along one of the extended arms and, if not hit, to spring thence into another tree, and eventually get back to earth undetected. Here, however, its pursuers are up in time to frustrate such hopes, and to the *shikári* on the pad elephant too good a mark is presented for any mistake.



HUNTING AN OLD BUFFALO

THE BUFFALO AT BAY

ALL over India the tame buffalo abounds. Frequently employed for draught, it is seen lumbering along with its ungainly bulk and tardy gait. More useful in ploughing, with perhaps an ox or a pony, or even a donkey, as its yoke-fellow, it drudges on at a pace that would irritate beyond all bounds the patience of any but an Indian peasant. As a beast of burden it is well-nigh useless from its invincible determination to wallow in any pool or stream it may come across. Its chief value, however, is as a milk-giving animal. To European taste, its milk, though rich, is unpalatable, while butter made from it has a tallowy flavour, and is scarcely eatable. In this latter form it is rarely used by natives; but being simmered over a slow fire and cooled gradually it becomes granulated, and, as *ghí*, is used for cooking purposes or eaten alone in large quantities. Sullen and clumsy in its domesticated state, the buffalo when wild is active enough, and ferocious in the extreme. Its mere bulk makes it dangerous, while its enormous horns are so sharp and strong as to penetrate even the hide of an elephant. To hunt it on foot is a foolhardy exploit, for a single shot, unless very luckily planted, is likely to do little else than further infuriate an already dangerous animal. Woe, then, to the sportsman on whom it turns! So great is its speed that none but a "racer" has any chance of

outstripping it, while a spear is but a poor defence against its rush. Except on the back of a well-trained elephant, the sportsman runs as great a risk as in facing a tiger on foot. Indeed, the chances against him are greater, insomuch as the tiger, though offering a smaller mark, is the more vulnerable animal of the two. Hence the pursuit is usually organized, as in the case of a tiger-drive, with a line of elephants. As a rule, the wild buffalo when pressed will make for a *jhil* (swamp), as seen in the present illustration, and when brought to bay will fight with a desperate determination.

DRIVING A BEAR OUT OF SUGAR CANES

DRIVING A BEAR OUT OF SUGAR-CANES

THE Bengal bear is distinguished by the deep black colour of his hair, which is long and thinly scattered over his body, and by a crescent of white, like a gorget, on his breast. His hind legs are shorter, and the paws flatter and longer than those of the European breed; his pace more shuffling and laboured. Clumsy, however, as he looks, it would fare ill with a man on foot who thought to outstrip him. He is nimble enough, too, in climbing, and will be up in no time amid the branches of a tree in which instinct tells him that a banquet of nuts will reward his activity. Steep, unfrequented banks, or burrows made by jackals and other animals, are his most frequent shelter, but a plantation of sugar-cane is the delight of his heart, the cover being thick and cool, and the succulent stalks furnishing him with both meat and drink. To the native he is a foe to be shirked unless under the protecting convoy of European sportsmen, when a whole village will gladly turn out to beat a *khet* (field). Such a scene we have here. Roused from his pleasant retreat, Bruin is making off for one of his hiding-places. The field, with a legion of pariah dogs, is in full chase, while in a tree, to which the quarry is to be driven, a native *shikâri* is ambushed with his rifle ready for the devastator of the village crops. The conical mounds in the right foreground are heaps of earth thrown up by those pestilent little

scourges, the white ants. When a bear finds a nest of ants, but especially white ants, he is in his glory; he tears up the whole burrow, licking up all the clusters he can get at, and lying with his tongue out to entice the little prey into his mouth. By this means he, no doubt, often obtains an ample meal, as frequently a bushel of white ants may be found in the same nest. In the left background, within a clump of mango-trees, bordered by the feathery bamboo, is a Hindoo temple; in the centre the frequent palm, with a line of buildings, probably those of an indigo factory.

THE HOG DEER AT BAY

THE HOG-DEER AT BAY

ABOUT the size of our fallow-deer, to whose horns those of the bucks are very similar, the hog-deer differs essentially in form of body. With a heavy head, not unlike that of a sheep, it has remarkably low fore-quarters, with hinder parts broad and fleshy. Down the back, in two parallel lines, run oval white spots, commencing at the withers and gradually lessening in size as they approach the insertion of the tail. The rest of the animal is of a mouse colour, modified, however, according to its age and environments. In point of speed the hog-deer is greatly inferior to the antelope. In hunting the latter, greyhounds are of little or no use, they being easily outstripped, unless by good fortune they chance to take a herd by surprise and terrify it into inactivity. With the hog-deer it is different. A greyhound will keep him at his full speed, even if not able to run him down, and will prevent him from squatting, as he is very apt to do. When closely pursued, the buck becomes extremely fierce, and rarely fails to make an obstinate defence. One very ugly trick the animal has, that of suddenly stopping short, letting the horseman pass, and then making an impetuous rush at the horse's hind quarters. If two sportsmen be in company, the one in the rear will at this moment get a favourable opportunity for delivering a spear; but the risk in hunting this animal being much

less than in that, for instance, of pig-sticking, a rider often goes out alone, and in the above contingency may find himself and his horse very unpleasantly situated. In the present Plate, brought to bay and in the act of charging the rider in blue, the deer finds himself taken in flank, while, should the spear fail to prove fatal, a bullet from the sportsman on the pad elephant will quickly settle matters.

Efforts have frequently been made to domesticate this animal, but without success. Taken in nets, treated with every kindness, and allowed ample space in which to roam, it so pines for liberty that no instance is known of its surviving confinement for more than a few days.

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